

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

## DOI-BLM-CO-040-2015-0050 EA

### Horton Street Trail Reroute



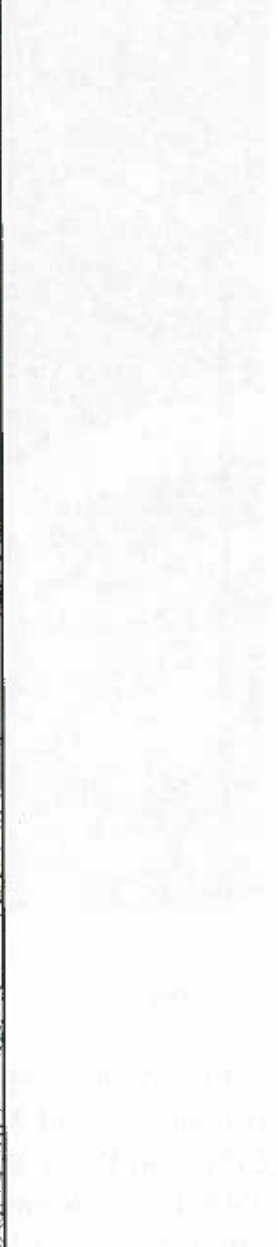
Colorado River Valley Field Office • COLORADO

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**APPLICANT.** BLM in association with the Town of Eagle

**BACKGROUND.** The trail reroute is within the Hardscrabble-East Eagle Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). The SRMA is subdivided into two recreation management zones (RMZ). RMZ 1 is managed for mountain biking and hiking while RMZ 2 is managed for motorsports. RMZ 1 is split by the Town of Eagle.

The Town of Eagle is a rapidly growing, active community of around 6,000 residents. The Town of Eagle owns in excess of 1000 acres of open space lands. The BLM and the Town coordinate on open space and trail development. Over the last 10 years the Town and BLM have coordinated on numerous joint trail projects. Most trails begin and end on Town of Eagle open space lands.

**PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION.** Decision to be made: Whether to reroute portions of the Horton Street Trail to a sustainable alignment and rehabilitate portions of the existing alignment.

**SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES.** BLM national register for land use planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents lists NEPA documents that have been initiated. This register allows the public to review and comment on BLM CRVFO NEPA and planning projects. This project was placed on the register in March 2015. No public comments were received.

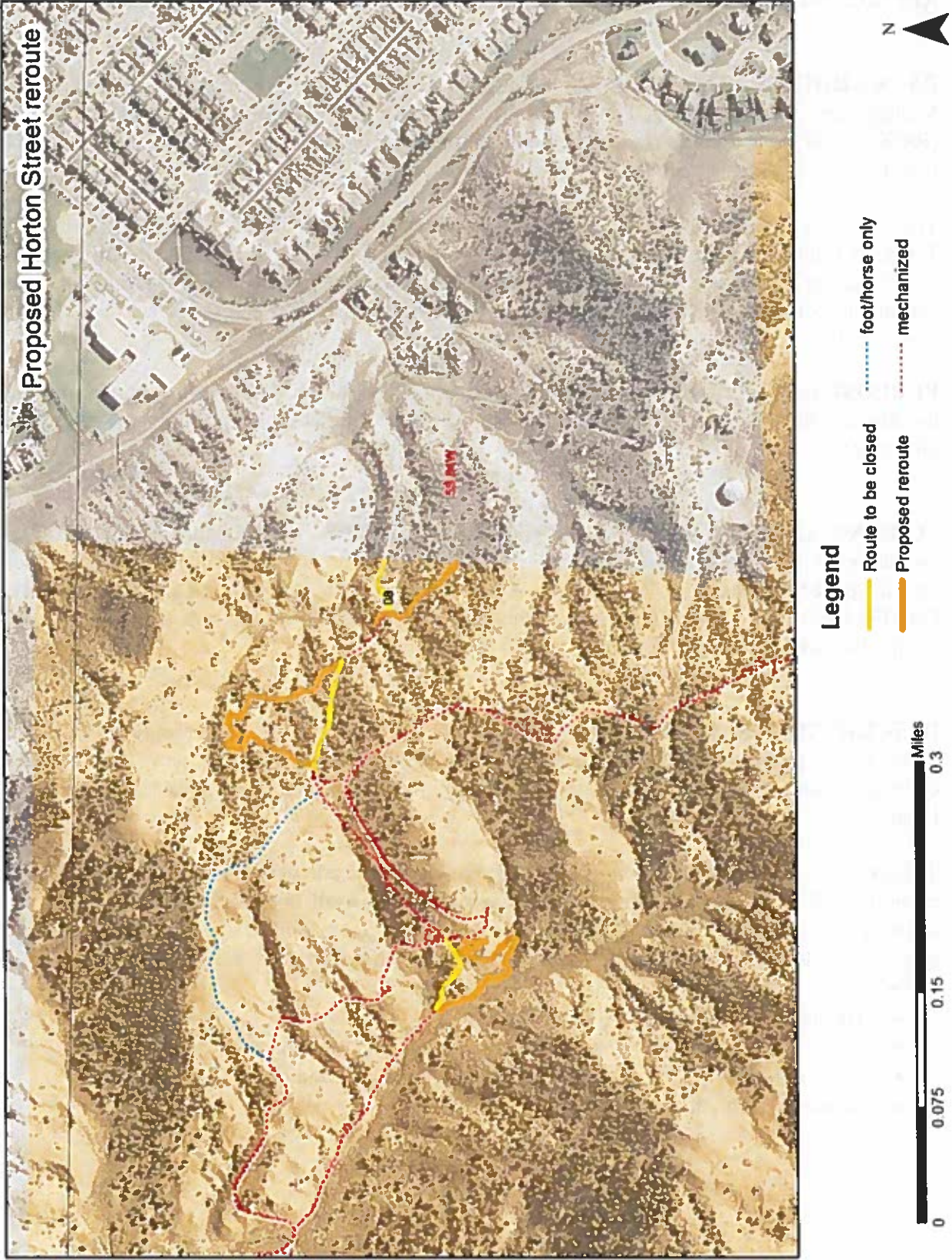
**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION.** The Proposed Action is to reroute a trail that has steep, eroding and unsustainable reaches. Approximately 1/2 mile of new trail would be constructed and maintained. A 1/4 mile of existing trail would be closed and rehabilitated (See Figure 2).

The proposed route would be a non-motorized trail with a tread width of 18"-36" and a clearance corridor of 6' wide by 8' high. Native materials in the trail corridor will be used for route construction and will incorporate switchbacks, water bars, and other standard trail-design practices so that erosion and maintenance needs are minimized. Design principles will also include:

- The average trail grade will be 10% or less.
- Grade reversals or water bars will be used so that water will exit the trail.
- A 5% outslope will be used to prevent water from running down the trail.
- Armoring of grade reversals turns.



Figure 2. Project Area Map.



The centerline of the new trail is flagged. The trail would be constructed in late summer or early fall 2015 by Rocky Mountain Youth Corps and volunteers using hand tools such as: pulaskis, shovels, rock bars, and loppers or the Town of Eagle may also hire a trail building company that uses the same hand tools and a mini-excavator for construction. The new route would go around trees, so the clearing of vegetation, which consists of sparse herbaceous and shrub cover, would be minimal. Long-term maintenance will be performed with the help of partners (including the Hardscrabble Trails Coalition and the Town of Eagle).

The existing fall-line route down would be reclaimed through the use of waterbars and check dams created with native materials. The native materials used for check dams will consist of soil, rocks, debris and woody vegetation found on-site. The debris will block the sightline to the old trail, preventing continued use of the route.

Trail users will be informed of the reroute through press releases and signs.

The trail will be monitored for noxious weeds. If monitoring indicates weeds are present, then spraying and reseeded with a native seed mix will be used to treat weed infestations.

**DESCRIPTION OF NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE.** The new trail route would not be constructed. The existing trail would continue to be used. The existing erosion caused by the trail would continue.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT ANALYZED IN DETAIL.** No other alternatives were considered in detail.

**PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW.** The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

**Name of Plan.** Colorado River Valley Field Office (CRVFO) Record of Decision (ROD) and Approved Resource Management Plan (RMP).

**Date Approved.** June 2015.

**Decision Number/Page.** Recreation and visitor services decisions beginning on page 69 including supporting information found in Appendix F - Recreation and Visitor Services Management Framework for Special and Extensive Recreation Management Areas and Appendix G - Travel Management.

**Decision Language.** Decision Number REC-MA-01. Designate five special recreation management areas (SRMA) (62,800 acres):

- REC-MA-01a. Hardscrabble-East Eagle SRMA (21,900 acres)
- REC-MA-01b. King Mountain SRMA (13,000 acres)

- REC-MA-01c. Red Hill SRMA (3,100 acres)
- REC-MA-01d. The Crown SRMA (9,100 acres)
- REC-MA-01e. Upper Colorado River SRMA (15,700 acres).

**RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, OTHER PLANS.** No other plans are applicable to the Proposed Action.

**STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH.** In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. The five standards pertain to the ecological health of: upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands.

The Proposed Action is located within the Eagle River South Land Health Assessment (BLM 2003). The West Hardscrabble Allotment, which includes the location of the Proposed Action, was determined to be not achieving Standard 2 (riparian systems) or Standard 4 (special status species). Riparian systems were impacted by heavy livestock use. Populations of Harrington's penstemon, a BLM sensitive species, were being impacted by heavy OHV use and livestock grazing. Greater sage-grouse historically occurred in the area, but the area is not currently mapped as greater sage-grouse habitat.

**DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS, MITIGATION MEASURES.** This section provides a description of the human and natural environmental resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action and alternatives. In addition, the section presents comparative analyses of the direct and indirect effects on the affected environment stemming from the implementation of the various actions.

A variety of laws, regulations, and policy directives mandate the evaluation of the effects of a Proposed Action and alternative(s) on certain environmental elements. Not all programs, resources or uses are present in the area, or if they are present, may not be affected by the Proposed Action and alternatives. Only those elements that are present and potentially affected are described and brought forth for detailed analysis (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Programs, Resources, and Uses (Including Supplemental Authorities).**

<b>Programs, Resources, and Uses (Including Supplemental Authorities)</b>	<b>Analyzed for Potential Affects</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Access and Transportation	X	
Air Quality		X
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern		X
Cadastral Survey		X
Cultural Resources	X	
Native American Religious Concerns	X	
Environmental Justice		X
Farmlands, Prime or Unique		X
Fire/Fuels Management		
Floodplains		X
Forests		
Geology and Minerals		X
Law Enforcement		
Livestock Grazing Management		X
Noise		X
Paleontology		X
Plants: Invasive, Non-native Species (Noxious Weeds)	X	
Plants: Sensitive, Threatened, or Endangered	X	
Plants: Vegetation	X	
Realty Authorizations		X
Recreation	X	
Social and/or Economics		X
Soils	X	
Visual Resources		X
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	X	
Water Quality, Surface and Ground		X
Water Rights		X
Wetlands and Riparian Zones		X
Wild and Scenic Rivers		X
Wilderness/WSAs/Wilderness Characteristics		X
Wildlife: Aquatic / Fisheries	X	
Wildlife: Migratory Birds	X	
Wildlife: Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered Species	X	
Wildlife: Terrestrial	X	



## ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

Travel in the Hardscrabble SRMA is limited to designated routes. The area is closed to motorized and mechanized modes of travel will be in place from December 1 through April 15 to protect winter big game habitat.

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

**Proposed Action.** The project would enhance the “close to home” area that would allow frequent/easy access to outdoor non-motorized activities. The non-motorized travel on single-track trails would be enhanced by rerouting the fall line trail.

**No Action Alternative.** Under the no action alternative, the Horton Street Trail would not be rerouted. The existing trail alignment would continue to be used resulting in gullying and soil erosion.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

A records search within one mile of the general project area and a Class III inventory of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) were completed by a Colorado BLM permitted cultural resource contracting firm (OAHP# EA.LM.R166 and EA.LM.R221, CRVFO CRIR# 5415-1). One previously documented site had been recorded (5EA2496) within one mile of the APE which is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). During project specific inventory, an additional 20.05 new acres were inventoried at the Class III level and no new cultural resources were documented. Vegetation within the project area consisted of an open sagebrush community with some pine trees near its southwest end. Ground visibility was around 80%. The project inventory and evaluation is in compliance with the NHPA, the Colorado State Protocol Agreement, and other federal law, regulation, policy, and guidelines regarding cultural resources.

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

**Proposed Action.** No historic properties are present in the APE; therefore, there would be no direct impacts to cultural resources from the implementation of the Proposed Action. This reroute has a determination of no historic properties affected.

Indirect long-term cumulative impacts from increased access and potential erosion could result in a range of impacts to known and undiscovered cultural resources in the vicinity of the location. These impacts could range from exposure of previously buried remains to illegal collection, excavation, and vandalism. Compliance with the Education/Discovery stipulation and hydrologic Best Management Practices should help in alleviating these impacts somewhat.



Additional areas or changes in the methodology to achieve the proposed effect may require additional archaeological inspection by a qualified archaeologist. These changes include but are not limited to changes in the proposed route alignment.

### ***Mitigation.***

Even though the project area was surveyed, ground disturbing activities have the potential to impact undiscovered, buried cultural resources through direct soil disturbance by machinery or indirect soil disturbance through vegetation removal and livestock trampling and concentrating. In order to protect cultural resources uncovered during operations the following conditions of approval are proposed as mitigation.

**Cultural Resources.** If subsurface cultural values are uncovered during operations, all work in the vicinity of the resource will cease and the authorized officer with the BLM notified immediately. The operator shall take any additional measures requested by the BLM to protect discoveries until they can be adequately evaluated by the permitted archaeologist. Within 48 hours of the discovery, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and consulting parties will be notified of the discovery and consultation will begin to determine an appropriate mitigation measure. BLM in cooperation with the operator will ensure that the discovery is protected from further disturbance until mitigation is completed. Operations may resume at the discovery site upon receipt of written instructions and authorization by the authorized officer.

**Native American Human Remains.** Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder must notify the authorized officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony on federal land. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (c) and (d), the holder must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery that could adversely affect the discovery. The holder shall make a reasonable effort to protect the human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony for a period of thirty days after written notice is provided to the authorized officer, or until the authorized officer has issued a written notice to proceed, whichever occurs first.

**No Action Alternative.** If no action occurs, potential adverse impacts to unknown cultural resources through project implementation, such as soil disturbance from rerouting the trail, would not occur. Additionally, if the trail is not rerouted to be more sustainable and less erodible, unknown cultural resources may be impacted from soil erosion.

## **NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS**

### **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.**

American Indian religious concerns are legislatively considered under several acts and Executive Orders, namely the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (PL 95-341), the Native

American Graves Environmental Assessment Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (PL 101-601), and Executive Order 13007 (1996; Indian Sacred Sites). In summary, these require, in concert with other provisions such as those found in the NHPA and ARPA, that the federal government carefully and proactively take into consideration traditional and religious Native American culture and life and ensure, to the degree possible, that access to sacred sites, the treatment of human remains, the possession of sacred items, the conduct of traditional religious practices, and the preservation of important cultural properties are considered and not unduly infringed upon. In some cases, these concerns are directly related to “historic properties” and “archaeological resources”. In some areas elements of the landscape without archaeological or other human material remains may be involved. Identification of these concerns is normally completed during the land use planning efforts, reference to existing studies, or via direct consultation.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.**

**Proposed Action.** The Ute have a generalized concept of spiritual significance that is not easily transferred to Euro-American models or definitions. As such the BLM recognizes that the Ute have identified sites that are of concern because of their association with Ute occupation of the area as part of their traditional lands. No traditional cultural properties, unique natural resources, or properties of a type previously identified as being of interest to local tribes, were identified during the cultural resources inventory of the project area. No additional Native American Indian consultation was conducted for the proposed project.

Mitigation measures for the Proposed Action require that additional areas or changes in the project implementation may require additional tribal consultation. These changes include but are not limited to changes in trail alignment.

**No Action Alternative.** If no action occurs, potential adverse impacts to unknown cultural resources which are significant to Native American tribes through project implementation, such as soil disturbance from rerouting the trail, would not occur. Additionally, if the trail is not rerouted to be more sustainable and less erodible, unknown cultural resources may be impacted from soil erosion.

#### **PLANTS: INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES (NOXIOUS WEEDS)**

##### **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.**

A landscape-wide weed inventory has not been completed on the Horton Street Trail reroute and the existing route rehabilitation. However, monitoring and other inventories have shown that several species of noxious weeds and invasive non-native species occur adjacent to the area of the Proposed Action and are listed on Table 2.

**Table 2. Noxious Weeds Infestation Known to Occur in Area of the Proposed Action.**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Statewide List Type
<i>Acroptilon repens</i>	Russian knapweed	B List
<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	Yellow toadflax	B List
<i>Carduus nutans</i>	Musk thistle	B List
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Canada thistle	B List
<i>Cynoglossum officinale</i> L.	Houndstongue	B List
<i>Carduus acanthoides</i> L.	Plumeless thistle	B List
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Bull thistle	B List
<i>Verbascum Thapsus</i> L.	Common mullein	C List
<i>Arctium minus</i> Bernh.	Common burdock	C List

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.**

**Proposed Action.** Weeds generally germinate and become established in areas of surface disturbing activities. Trail construction can contribute to the establishment and expansion of noxious weeds by creating areas of disturbance and through seed transport. The Proposed Action involves constructing a new 1.3 mile stretch of trail which could provide a niche for weed establishment. If monitoring indicates weeds are present, then spraying and reseeding with a native seed mix will be used to treat weed infestations.

**No Action Alternative.** The existing fall line with steep, eroding and unsustainable reaches would continue to be used. In the No Action Alternative there are no rehabilitation efforts to reclaim disturbed areas of the trail caused erosion.

**PLANTS: SENSITIVE, THREATENED, AND ENDANGERED****AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.**

Table 3 includes the list from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS 2015) for Federally listed, proposed, or candidate plant species and the Colorado BLM State Director's Sensitive Species List (BLM 2009) for sensitive plant species that may occur within Eagle County and be impacted by the Proposed Action. Table 3 also summarizes their habitat descriptions and potential for occurrence in the Proposed Action area based on known geographic range and habitats present.

**Table 3. Special Status Plant Species in Eagle County.**

Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Plant Species		
Species	Habitat	Potential for Occurrence
Ute ladies'-tresses orchid ( <i>Spiranthes diluvialis</i> )  Threatened	Habitat for this threatened species is found in seasonally flooded or subirrigated alluvial soils along streams, lakes or in wetland areas; 4,500 to 7,000 feet.	No: There are no seasonally flooded or subirrigated alluvial soils within or adjacent to the project area.
BLM Sensitive Plant Species		
Species	Habitat	Potential for Occurrence



Harrington's penstemon ( <i>Penstemon harringtonii</i> )	Wyoming or mountain big sagebrush or mixed mountain shrub communities on rocky loam or rocky clay loam soils between the elevations of 6,200 to 10,000 feet. Soils usually of basaltic or calcareous nature.	<b>Yes:</b> Multiple populations exist adjacent to the project area.
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The BLM sensitive plant, Harrington's penstemon (*Penstemon harringtonii*), has been documented in sagebrush communities within 0.25 miles of the Proposed Action area. A botanical survey conducted on May 1, 2015 found no penstemon plants within the immediate project area.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

Due to the absence of any known occurrences or potential habitat for any Federally listed or BLM sensitive plant species within the project area, the Proposed Action would have "No Effect" on listed plant populations or habitat and no impacts on BLM sensitive plants or their habitats.

#### LAND HEALTH STANDARD 4 FOR SPECIAL STATUS, THREATENED, AND ENDANGERED PLANTS.

The project area lies within the Eagle River South Land Health Assessment unit. The assessment determined that the West Hardscrabble allotment, which encompasses the Proposed Action area, was not achieving Standard 4 for Harrington's penstemon due primarily to impacts from extensive OHV use and livestock grazing within occupied habitat. Harrington's penstemon is known to occur immediately adjacent to the project area but was not located within or downslope of the area of proposed disturbance. Implementation of the Proposed Action should not contribute to degradation of conditions for special status plants.

### PLANTS: VEGETATION

#### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

The project area is on steep gypsum slopes southwest of the Town of Eagle. The primary ground cover is a dense and diverse community of microbiotic crusts with a sparse cover of vascular plants. Dominant vascular plants present in the project area include: Utah juniper (*Juniperus osteosperma*), pinyon pine (*Pinus edulis*), mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*), Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp *wyomingensis*), winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus*), Indian ricegrass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*), and a few forbs.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

**Proposed Action.** The Proposed Action is to construct a new single-track trail with an 18-36" tread width. The Proposed Action would involve clearing soil crusts on the 18-36" tread and vegetation in a corridor approximately 6 feet wide. This would result in the permanent loss of less than one-half acre of vegetation and soil crusts. Approximately one-quarter mile of existing

trail would be closed and reclaimed. Rocks or branches from trees and brush cleared from the new alignment would be scattered across the closed trail to discourage continued use. With implementation of the appropriate mitigation, the closed trail should begin revegetating with desirable species within one to two growing seasons after trail construction.

**No Action Alternative.** No new trail construction would occur and there would be no loss of vegetation in the project area.

### **LAND HEALTH STANDARD 3 FOR HEALTHY PLANT COMMUNITIES.**

The Proposed Action is located within the Eagle River South Land Health Assessment area (BLM 2003). The West Hardscrabble allotment, which includes the Proposed Action area, was determined to be meeting Standard 3 for plant communities, but with problem areas identified. The identified problems were related to the destruction or poor condition of vegetation and biological soil crusts and increased erosion due to intensive OHV activity, moderate to heavy browsing on sagebrush, pinyon-juniper encroachment and the lack of sagebrush recruitment following mechanical brushbeating. Although the Proposed Action would result in the net loss of approximately one half acre of vegetation, rerouting the trail to a less steep alignment would help reduce erosion and should result in the gradual establishment of vegetation on the closed trail. Land Health Standard 3 should continue to be met with implementation of the Proposed Action and proposed mitigation.

## **RECREATION**

### **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.**

**Recreation Objectives.** BLM lands in the Hardscrabble area are designated as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). Within BLM, SRMAs are managed under a framework that focuses on the positive outcomes (experiences and benefits) of engaging in recreational activities. The Hardscrabble-East Eagle SRMA is subdivided into recreation management zones (RMZ) to further delineate specific recreation opportunities. The recreation objectives are established in the CRVFO ROD and Approved RMP (BLM 2015), specifies to manage The Hardscrabble SRMA for a specific set of activities, experiences and benefits. The targeted activities in the RMZ are mountain biking for cross-country (XC) type bikes and hiking. Experiences include: 1) Enjoying frequent access to outdoor physical activity, 2) Developing your skills and abilities, 3) For the challenge or sport, and 4) Enjoying the areas wildlife, scenery, views and aesthetics. Benefits include: 1) Improved physical fitness/ better health maintenance, 2) Heightened sense of satisfaction with our community and 3) Maintain local tourism revenue.

**Recreation Setting Characteristics (RSCs).** RSCs are a description of the physical, social and operational characteristics that define an SRMA's qualities and condition. Recreation settings are described based on a spectrum of possible recreation settings ranging from a primitive classification to an urban classification. Three recreation setting components and their RSCs are considered under the classifications: a) the physical qualities of nature and the landscape defined

by remoteness, naturalness and facilities; b) the social qualities associated with use defined by group size, contacts and evidence of use; and c) the operational conditions to manage recreation use defined by type of access, visitor services and management controls. Monitoring and evaluation may cause recreation managers to adjust the RSCs over the life of the plan to meet recreation objectives (BLM 2014).

Appendix F of the CRVFO Approved ROD and RMP Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (BLM 2015) identified the desired RSCs for The Hardscrabble-East Eagle SRMA in RMZ 1. These are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4. Desired Recreation Setting Characteristics.**

<b>Physical RSCs</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Remoteness</b>	Overtime class acreages may change but all classes still exist.
<b>Naturalness</b>	The existing , but varied, level of naturalness is maintained. Any new non-recreational land uses have a low level of contrast with the landscape and are not visually obvious from recreation facilities and trails.
<b>Visitor Facilities</b>	Single-track trail systems are expanded, maintained, re-routed and signed.
<b>Social RSCs</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Contacts</b>	Participants encounter a primary use season (Mid-April through October) average of up to 29 encounters/day within areas classified as middle country.
<b>Group Size</b>	Participants encounter a primary use season (Mid-April through October) average of up to 9 people per group away from trailheads
<b>Evidence of Use</b>	Localized areas of vegetation alteration and wear are found near along trails, at trailheads and at campsites. Inappropriate recreation use is rehabilitated.
<b>Operational RSCs</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Public Access</b>	Mountain bike use is predominant in the RMZ and motorized use is limited to designated motorized routes.
<b>Visitor Services and Information</b>	Informational materials describe the SRMA and recreation opportunities. BLM staff/volunteers are periodically present at recreation sites but occasionally present away from recreation sites.
<b>Management Controls and Regulations</b>	Adequate but not overly restrictive level of visitor and land use restrictions initially in place to protect RSCs including winter closures for the benefit of wildlife. Restrictions and ethics are posted at trailheads. Directional signage is installed on trails.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.**

**Proposed Action. Recreation Objective.** Overall the Proposed Action will help achieve the SRMA recreation objective by enhancing mountain biking activity opportunities and foster the realization of the targeted outcomes. In addition, the development of a sustainable foot/bike loop trail system helps meet local demand. The Proposed Action will provide an improved “close to home” area that will allow frequent/easy access to outdoor non-motorized activities. The main recreation activities of biking and hiking on single-track trails will be enhanced. The restoration



the existing fall line route will make some portions of the management area more desirable to trail users seeking a more natural-looking trail.

**RSCs.** The Proposed Action is consistent with the desired physical, social and operational RSCs identified in Appendix F of the Colorado River Valley Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (BLM 2015). Physically, the existing level of naturalness will be maintained. The single-track trail system will be re-routed, expanded, maintained, and signed. Overall the physical RSCs will remain relatively constant. Socially, encounters will likely increase with a better trail built. Inappropriate recreation use will be rehabilitated. Directional signage will be installed on trails. Operationally mountain bike use will be predominant within the SRMA with no change in access for motorized recreation activities.

**No Action Alternative. Recreation Objective.** The visitor's realization of the targeted recreation activities and outcomes will not be improved under this alternative. None of the recreation enhancements described under the Proposed Action would be created.

**RSCs.** The existing physical, social and operational RSCs will not change. The existing fall line trail would continue to receive use but that use would likely drop as the trail deteriorates. The existing trespass and trail erosion concerns would also continue.

## SOILS

### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

A review of the soil survey by the NRCS for the *Aspen-Gypsum Area, Colorado, Parts of Eagle, Garfield, and Pitkin Counties* indicate one soil map unit occur within the proposed project area (NRCS 1991). The NRCS soil map unit description (NRCS 2015) is provided below:

**Gypsum land-Gypsiorthids complex (55)** – This soil map unit is found on mountainsides, hills, and in drainage ways on slopes of 12 to 65 percent. Approximately 65 percent of the unit is Gypsum land and 20 percent Gypsiorthids. The remaining 15 percent of the unit is composed of a mix of map units. The Gypsum land is primarily exposed gypsum material while the Gypsiorthids are moderately deep, well drained and derived from colluvium with high gypsum content. Surface runoff for this unit is very rapid and the water erosion hazard is slight to severe.

Soil health was evaluated in 2003 during the Eagle River South Land Health Assessment. BLM staff concluded that soils were meeting land health standards throughout the proposed project area, with slight to moderate departures from expected conditions (BLM 2003).

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

**Proposed Action.** Trail construction results in vegetation removal and soil surface compaction that may lead to elevated erosion rates. These impacts should be limited in scope due to the narrow linear feature of the trail and the short distances proposed for construction. In addition, there may be a benefit to soils by rehabilitating portions of the steep, fall-line trail and building a

re-aligned trail that better contours with the landscape topography. Using best management practices and water bars should minimize erosion. If best management practices and design features are implemented successfully, no additional mitigation measures would be required.

**No Action Alternative.** Under the no action alternative, the trail would not be re-routed. The existing trail alignment would continue to be used resulting in continued soil erosion impacts.

#### **LAND HEALTH STANDARD 1 FOR SOILS.**

Based on the Eagle River South Land Health Assessment, BLM staff concluded that soils in the project area were meeting Standard 1 with some problems (BLM 2003). Implementation of the Proposed Action is not anticipated to degrade soil health from current conditions.

### **VISUAL RESOURCES**

#### **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.**

The proposed project area is located in an area classified as Visual Resource Management Class (VRM) Class II. The objective of VRM Class II is to retain the existing characteristic landscape. The level of change in any of the basic landscape elements (line, form, color, texture) due to management activities should be low and not evident. The area of the Proposed Action has a variety of landscape character types and varying degrees of alteration from human activities. The topography varies from steep foothills rising to steeper mountain peaks in the background. Numerous side drainages and gulches dissect the landforms adding to the variety and topographic texture. Vegetation consists of pinion juniper and sage brush plant communities. The surrounding landscape has been modified and already contains linear features such as buried utilities, roads, and dense subdivisions. The project area is along the I-70 corridor.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.**

**Proposed Action.** The Proposed Action would not be visible from the key observation point of Interstate 70 or the Town of Eagle. The long term contrast rating process shows that with inclusion of design and mitigation measures no new contrast would be introduced or long term impacts. Therefore the Proposed Action meets the objective of VRM Class II in maintaining the existing landscape character.

**No Action Alternative.** The existing natural landscape would be maintained and VRM Class II objectives would be met.

### **WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID**

#### **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.**

Implementation of the proposed activities would require the use of fuel and lubricants to operate the mini-excavator.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

**Proposed Action.** Fuel and lubricants would be stored in appropriate containers and proper handling should prevent spills or leaks. Due to the relatively small amount of fuel and lubricants expected to be involved to implement the project, environmental impacts would be negligible. If best management practices are implemented successfully, no additional mitigation measures would be required.

**No Action Alternative.** Under the no action alternative there would be no fuel or lubricants present.

## WILDLIFE: AQUATIC / FISHERIES

### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

There are no fish bearing streams in the project area. Brush Creek, which supports brook (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), brown (*Salmo trutta*), and rainbow (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) trout, flows within approximately ½ mile of the Project Area. Brush Creek flows into the Eagle River, which supports brook, brown, and rainbow trout; mottled sculpin (*Cottus bairdii*), speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus*), and suckers (species undetermined). The Eagle River flows within one mile of the project area. No Federally listed, proposed, or candidate aquatic wildlife or BLM sensitive aquatic wildlife species are documented in the Eagle River or Brush Creek near the project area (USFWS 2015, BLM 2009).

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

**Proposed Action.** Rerouting the trail to a less steep alignment and rehabilitating approximately ¼ mile of existing trail would curtail erosion into ephemeral streams that drain into Brush Creek and the Eagle River. This would reduce sedimentation in the watershed.

**No Action Alternative.** Erosion would continue to occur along steep sections of the existing trail, depositing sediments into ephemeral drainages that drain into Brush Creek and the Eagle River.

### LAND HEALTH STANDARDS 3 FOR AQUATIC WILDLIFE AND 4 FOR SPECIAL STATUS AQUATIC WILDLIFE.

Based on the Land Health Assessment for the Eagle River South Watershed (BLM 2003), Land Health Standard 3 for plant and animal communities was being achieved with problem areas in the West Hardscrabble Allotment, but no specific issues regarding aquatic species or their habitats were identified. The Proposed Action would be expected to improve conditions in the watershed and would not affect the achievement of Standard 3. Standard 4 is not applicable because there are no special status aquatic species documented in the project area or its area of influence.



## WILDLIFE: MIGRATORY BIRDS

### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) provides protections to native birds, with the exception of certain upland fowl managed by state wildlife agencies for hunting. Within the context of the MBTA, migratory birds include non-migratory resident species as well as true migrants. For most migrant and resident species, nesting habitat is critical for supporting reproduction in terms of both nest sites and food. Also, because birds are generally territorial during the nesting season, their ability to access and utilize sufficient food is limited by the quality of the occupied territory. During non-breeding seasons, birds are generally non-territorial and able to feed across a larger area and wider range of habitats.

The project vicinity provides cover, forage, breeding, and/or nesting habitat for a variety of migratory birds that summer, winter, or migrate through the area. Migratory bird species that are federally listed and classified by the BLM as sensitive species are addressed in the Wildlife: Sensitive, Threatened, and Endangered Species section of this EA.

BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2008-050 provides guidance toward meeting the BLM's responsibilities under the MBTA and the Executive Order 13186. The guidance directs Field Offices to promote the maintenance and improvement of habitat quantity and quality and to avoid, reduce or mitigate adverse impacts on the habitats of migratory bird species of conservation concern to the extent feasible, and in a manner consistent with regional or statewide bird conservation priorities.

The MBTA prohibits the "take" of a protected species. Under the Act, the term "take" means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct. The USFWS interprets "harm" and "kill" to include loss of eggs or nestlings due to abandonment or reduced attentiveness by one or both adults as a result of disturbance by human activity, as well as physical destruction of an occupied nest.

The 1988 amendment to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act mandates the USFWS to "identify species, subspecies, and populations of all migratory nongame birds that, without additional conservation actions, are likely to become candidates for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973." The *Birds of Conservation Concern 2008* (USFWS 2008) is the most recent effort to carry out this mandate. The CRVFO is within the Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau Bird Conservation Region 16.

The project area includes the following plant communities and potentially associated migratory bird species.

**Pinyon-juniper Woodlands.** Pinyon and juniper trees provide food, cover and nest sites for numerous migratory birds. Species on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC) list that occur in the CRVFO and are associated with pinyon-juniper woodlands include the pinyon jay (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*), juniper titmouse (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) and Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*). Other migratory species associated with this plant community within the

CRVFO include the broad-tailed hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*), black-chinned hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*), Say's phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), ash-throated flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), gray flycatcher (*Empidonax wrightii*), Townsend's solitaire (*Myadestes townsendi*), American robin (*Turdus migratorius*), Western bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*), mountain bluebird (*S. currucoides*), bushtit (*Psaltirparus minimus*), blue-gray gnatcatcher (*Poliopitila caerulea*), plumbeous vireo (*Vireo plumbeus*), Western scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), Clarks's nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*), black-throated gray warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*), Virginia's warbler (*Oreothlypis virginiae*), chipping sparrow (*Spizella passerina*), lesser goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*) and house finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*). Winter visitors to pinyon-juniper habitats include the Cassin's finch (*Carpodacus cassinii*), a BCC species, which typically nests in montane and subalpine forests, though occasionally nests in pinyon-juniper woodlands.

Sagebrush Shrublands. Sagebrush and the associated native perennial grasses and forbs provide food, cover and nest sites for migratory birds. Sagebrush obligates that potentially occur in the CRVFO include the sagebrush sparrow (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*), sage thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) and Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*), a BCC species. Other migratory species associated with sagebrush shrublands within the CRVFO include the western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*), western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), green-tailed towhee (*Pipilo chlorurus*), vesper sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*) and lark sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*). Some species are associated with both pinyon-juniper woodlands and sagebrush shrublands, including the Say's phoebe and gray flycatcher.

Mixed Mountain Shrublands. The vegetation of mixed mountain shrublands varies substantially depending on elevation, slope, aspect, and soil. More mesic (moist) sites such as on north-facing slopes and along minor drainages are typically dominated by Gambel's oak and serviceberry, while more xeric (dry) sites such as south-facing slopes are typically dominated by mountain-mahogany, bitterbrush, snowberry, and sagebrush. The dense cover, tall height, and abundant acorns and berries of mesic oak-serviceberry stands provide cover, forage, and nesting habitat for numerous species including spotted towhees (*Pipilo maculatus*), Virginia's warblers (*Oreothlypis virginiae*), black-headed grosbeaks (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), black-billed magpies (*Pica hudsonia*), broad-tailed hummingbirds (*Selasphorus platycercus*), green-tailed towhees (*Pipilo chlorurus*), mourning doves (*Zenaida macroura*), Western scrub-jays (*Aphelocoma californica*) and lazuli buntings (*Passerina amoena*).

Raptors. Many raptors forage over wide areas, so even if they aren't known to nest in a specific area, they may still fly over searching for food. Raptors on the BCC list that occur in portions of the CRVO include the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*), prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), peregrine falcon (*F. peregrinus*) and flammulated owl (*Psilosops flammeolus*). Prairie falcons nest on rocky ledges and cliffs and hunt in grasslands and semi-desert shrublands. Peregrine falcons hunt near nest sites and along rivers and lakes, but can be found in nearly any open vegetation community during migration and winter. Flammulated owls typically nest in ponderosa pine and aspen forests, but have been found nesting in mixed forests, and reportedly use old-growth pinyon-juniper woodlands.

A variety of raptors not on the BCC list are known to occur in the CRVO including the American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), northern pygmy owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*) and northern saw-whet owl (*Aegolius acadicus*). The northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), a BLM sensitive species, is an occasional winter visitor to pinyon-juniper woodlands from its nesting habitat in montane and subalpine forests.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.**

**Proposed Action.** Because trail construction and reclamation would be conducted outside of the nesting season (May 15 to July 15), breeding birds of conservation concern will not be impacted. Any migratory birds potentially using the area during project implementation would be expected to disperse to similar vegetation in the project vicinity. Any disturbances resulting from trail construction and reclamation work including noise, human presence, and equipment would be short-term. Due to the small amount of vegetation that would be lost, abundance of similar vegetation in the project vicinity, and ability of many birds to habituate to localized disturbances, the Proposed Action is not expected to impact migratory bird populations over the long term on a landscape level.

**No Action Alternative.** New trail construction would not occur, and the existing route would not be partially reclaimed and closed to public use. Vegetation would not be removed, and disturbances from noise, human presence, and equipment associated with trail work would not temporarily displace migratory birds. Human use would remain high along the existing route. Localized human disturbances along the proposed new trail would not occur.

#### **LAND HEALTH STANDARDS 3 FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS AND 4 FOR SPECIAL STATUS MIGRATORY BIRDS.**

Based on the Land Health Assessment for the Eagle River South Watershed (BLM 2003), Land Health Standard 4 for migratory birds and raptors was being achieved. The Proposed Action would not diminish the achievement of this standard for migratory birds and raptors.

### **WILDLIFE: SENSITIVE, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED**

#### **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.**

Table 5 summarizes Federally listed, proposed and candidate terrestrial wildlife species potentially occurring in Eagle County (USFWS 2015) and species on the Colorado BLM State Director's Sensitive Species List (BLM 2009) that may occur in the project area.



**Table 5. Special Status Terrestrial Wildlife Species in Eagle County.**

Federally Listed, Proposed, or Candidate Terrestrial Wildlife Species		
Species and Status	Habitat/Range Summaries	Occurrence/Potentially Impacted
Canada lynx ( <i>Lynx Canadensis</i> )  Threatened	Canada lynx occupy high-latitude or high-elevation coniferous forests characterized by cold, snowy winters and an adequate prey base. In the western US, lynx are associated with mesic forests of lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and quaking aspen in the upper montane and subalpine zones, generally between 8,000 and 12,000 feet in elevation. Although snowshoe hares ( <i>Lepus americanus</i> ) are the preferred prey, lynx also feed on mountain cottontails ( <i>Sylvilagus nuttallii</i> ), pine squirrels ( <i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i> ), and blue grouse ( <i>Dendragapus obscurus</i> ). The Forest Service has mapped suitable denning, winter, and other habitat for lynx within the White River and Routt National Forests. The mapped suitable habitat comprises areas known as Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs) that are the approximate size of a female's home range. Several LAUs include small parcels of BLM lands. There are no LAUs or mapped lynx linkage areas in the project area.	Absent/No
Mexican spotted owl ( <i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i> )  Threatened	This owl nests, roosts, and hunts in mature coniferous forests in canyons and foothills. The key habitat components are old-growth forests with uneven-age stands, high canopy closure, high tree density, fallen logs and snags. The only extant populations in Colorado are in the Pikes Peak and Wet Mountain areas of south-central Colorado and the Mesa Verde area of southwestern Colorado.	Absent/No
Greater Sage-grouse ( <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i> )  Candidate	Sage-grouse are found only in areas where sagebrush is abundant, providing both food and cover. Sage-grouse prefer relatively open sagebrush flats or rolling sagebrush hills. Within the CRVFO, sage-grouse are present in the northeast part of the Field Office in the Northern Eagle/Southern Routt population. While small (<500 birds), this population probably has, or had, a relationship with the larger population in Moffat, Rio Blanco and western Routt counties, and probably with the Middle Park population to the east. There is no preliminary priority or preliminary general habitat mapped in the project area.	Absent/No
Yellow-billed cuckoo ( <i>Coccyzus americanus</i> )  Threatened	This secretive species occurs in mature riparian forests of cottonwoods and other large deciduous trees with a well-developed understory of tall riparian shrubs. Western cuckoos breed in large blocks of riparian habitats, particularly woodlands with cottonwoods ( <i>Populus fremontii</i> ) and willows ( <i>Salix</i> sp.). A few sightings of yellow-billed cuckoo have occurred in western Colorado along the Colorado River near Grand Junction. There is no proposed critical habitat in the Colorado River Valley Field Office.	Absent/No
Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly ( <i>Boloria acrocnema</i> )  Endangered	The butterfly has been verified at only two areas in the San Juan Mountains in Colorado. There is anecdotal evidence of other colonies in the San Juans and southern Sawatch ranges in Colorado. The butterfly exists above treeline on north and east facing slopes in patches of its larval host plant, snow willow. The greatest threat is butterfly collecting. Climatological patterns, disease, parasitism, predation, and trampling of larvae by humans and livestock pose additional threats.	Absent/No
Colorado BLM Sensitive Terrestrial Wildlife Species Present or Potentially Present in the Project Area		

Species	Habitat/Range Summaries	Occurrence/ Potentially Impacted
Townsend's big-eared bat ( <i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i> )  Fringed myotis ( <i>Myotis thysanodes</i> )	Occurs as scattered populations at moderate elevations on the western slope of Colorado. Habitat associations are not well defined. Both bats will forage for aerial insects over pinyon-juniper, montane conifer and semi-desert shrubland communities. Roosts in caves, rock crevices, mines, buildings and tree cavities. Both species are widely distributed and usually occur in small groups. Townsend's big-eared bats are not abundant anywhere in its range due to patchy distribution and limited availability of suitable roosting. No roosts or hibernaculum are documented in the project area.	Possible/No
White-tailed prairie dog ( <i>Cynomys leucurus</i> )	Occurs in western Colorado, typically in desert grasslands and shrub grasslands between 5,000-10,000 feet in elevation.	Absent/No
Northern goshawk ( <i>Accipiter gentilis</i> )	Montane and subalpine coniferous forests and aspen forests; may move to lower elevation pinyon-juniper woodlands in search of prey during winter. Preys on small-medium sized birds and mammals. Breeds in coniferous deciduous and mixed forests. Nests are typically located on a northerly aspect in a drainage or canyon and are often near a stream. Nest areas contain one or more stands of large, old trees with a dense canopy cover. A goshawk pair occupies its nest area from March until late September. The nest area is the center of all movements and behaviors associated with breeding from courtship through fledging.	Possible in Winter/No
Ferruginous hawk ( <i>Buteo regalis</i> )	Open, rolling and/or rugged terrain in grasslands and shrubsteppe communities; also grasslands and cultivated fields; nests on cliffs and rocky outcrops. Fall/ winter resident, non-breeding.	Possible in Winter/No
Bald eagle ( <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> )	Nesting/Roosting: mature cottonwood forests along rivers. Foraging: fish and waterfowl along rivers and lakes; may feed on carrion, rabbits and other foods in winter.	Possible/No
American Peregrine Falcon ( <i>Falco peregrines anatum</i> )	Rare spring and fall migrant in western valleys. Peregrine falcons inhabit open spaces associated with high cliffs and bluffs overlooking rivers. The falcon nests on high cliffs and forages over nearby woodlands.	Possible/No
Greater Sage-grouse ( <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i> )	See Federally Listed, Proposed or Candidate Terrestrial Wildlife Species portion of table.	Absent/No
Brewer's sparrow ( <i>Spizella berveri</i> )	Summers in western Colorado mountain parks and is a spring/fall migrant at lower elevations. Sagebrush obligate with an apparently secure conservation status in Colorado. Primary habitat is mature big sagebrush 1.6-3 ft. tall with low to moderate canopy cover, and habitat patches ≥15 acres. Mesic sites, particularly riparian areas within sagebrush habitats, are also an important primary habitat component.	Possible/No
White-faced ibis ( <i>Plegadis chihi</i> )	Primarily inhabits freshwater wetlands, especially cattail ( <i>Typha</i> spp.) and bulrush ( <i>Scirpus</i> spp.) marshes. Rare, non-breeding, summer migrant to western Colorado valleys and mountain lakes. Feeds in flooded hay meadows, agricultural fields, and estuarine wetlands. Breeds in isolated colonies in mainly shallow marshes with "islands" of emergent vegetation.	Absent/No
Midget faded rattlesnake ( <i>Crotalus viridis concolor</i> )	Found in northwestern Colorado, including western Garfield County. Sagebrush communities with an abundance of south-facing rock outcroppings and exposed canyon walls. Rocky outcrops are essential for cover, variable thermal conditions and hibernation.	Absent/No

Utah milk snake ( <i>Lampropeltis triangulum taylori</i> )	In Colorado, milk snakes occur in shortgrass prairie, sandhills, shrubby hillsides, canyons and open stands of ponderosa pine in the foothills, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and arid river valleys. <i>L. triangulum taylori</i> occurs in west-central Colorado below 6,000 feet elevation.	Absent/No
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Due to the absence of critical habitat, occupied habitat, or known occurrences of any Federally listed, proposed, or candidate terrestrial wildlife species in the project area, the Proposed Action would have “No Effect” on listed terrestrial wildlife.

**Special Status Raptors.** Bald eagles were removed from the federal threatened and endangered species list in 2007, but are still protected under the MBTA and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and are currently listed as a BLM sensitive species. The project area overlaps with bald eagle winter range and winter forage range as mapped by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). Roost sites are mapped along the Eagle River and Brush Creek. There is no riparian vegetation in the project area. The project area does not provide nesting habitat for special status raptors.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.

**Proposed Action. Special Status Bats.** Roosting habitat for special status bats in cliffs, rock crevices, or abandoned mines would not be affected. Vegetation loss would be minimal and would not have a measurable effect on insect populations.

**Special Status Raptors.** Any special status raptors in the area would be foraging over large expanses of upland vegetation and could avoid the project area during project implementation.

**Brewer’s Sparrow.** If this species uses sagebrush in the project area, birds could be temporarily displaced due to noise, human presence, and equipment during trail construction. Breeding would not be impacted due to mitigation (see Wildlife: Migratory Birds). Vegetation removal would be unlikely to impact use of the area by this species.

**No Action Alternative.** The trail would not be rerouted, so vegetation would not be removed and wildlife would not be temporarily displaced due to noise, human presence, and equipment.

#### LAND HEALTH STANDARD 4 FOR SPECIAL STATUS WILDLIFE SPECIES.

Based on the Land Health Assessment for the Eagle River South Watershed (BLM 2003), Land Health Standard 4 for special status species and their habitats was being achieved. The Proposed Action would not diminish the achievement of this standard.

### WILDLIFE: TERRESTRIAL

#### AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT.

Diverse plant communities across the CRVFO support a variety of terrestrial wildlife that summer, winter, or migrate through the area. Wildlife need to move across the landscape for

food, cover and in response to seasonal conditions. Human development and activities have fragmented habitat, and in some cases, created barriers to wildlife movement. Factors contributing to wildlife disturbance or degradation and fragmentation of habitat include power lines, pipelines, fences, public recreation use, residential and commercial development, vegetation treatments, livestock and wild ungulate grazing, oil and gas development, fire suppression, roads and trails.

**Big Game.** Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and Rocky Mountain elk (*Cervus elaphus nelsonii*) are recreationally important species that occur in the project area. BLM managed lands provide a large portion of the undeveloped habitat for big game in Colorado. Mule deer and elk typically occupy higher elevation, forested areas during summer and migrate to lower elevation sagebrush-dominated ridges and south-facing slopes during winter. CPW maintains maps of habitat for big game and other wildlife species. The project area overlaps with mapped elk and mule deer summer and winter range and winter concentration areas, as well as mule deer severe winter range. Winter range is often considered the most limiting habitat type for mule deer and elk, so effective management of these areas is particularly important to the health of populations.

**Other Mammals.** Numerous small mammals could reside within the planning area, including mice (*Peromyscus* spp.), woodrats (*Neotoma* spp.), ground squirrels (*Spermophilus* spp.), chipmunks (*Neotamias* spp.), rabbits (*Sylvilagus* spp.), skunks (*Mephitis mephitis*), raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) and porcupines (*Erethizon dorsatum*). Many of these mammals are prey for raptors and larger carnivores. Larger carnivores expected to occur include bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) and coyotes (*Canis latrans*). CPW has mapped the entire project area as mountain lion (*Felis concolor*) and black bear (*Ursus americanus*) habitat. Mountain lions are most likely to be in the vicinity when mule deer are present. Bats documented in Northwest Colorado that could occur in the CRVFO that are not on the BLM special status species list include pallid bats (*Antrozous pallidus*), big brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*), spotted bats (*Euderma maculatum*), silver-haired bats (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*), hoary bats (*Lasiurus cinereus*), California myotis (*Myotis californicus*), Western small-footed myotis (*M. ciliolabrum*), long-eared myotis (*M. evotis*), little brown myotis (*M. lucifugus*), long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*), Yuma myotis (*M. yumanensis*), big free-tailed bats (*Nyctinomops macrotis*), canyon bats (*Parastrellus hesperus*), and Brazilian free-tailed bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*).

**Gallinaceous Birds.** Game birds that may be found in the project area include dusky grouse (*Dendragapus obscurus*), ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*) and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*). The project area is mapped as turkey overall range, but not as a production area, roost site, winter range or winter concentration area.

**Waterfowl.** There are no rivers, perennial streams, reservoirs, or ponds in the project area.

**Reptiles.** Reptile species most likely to occur in the project area include sagebrush lizards (*Sceloporus graciosus*), prairie and plateau lizards (*S. undulatus*), tree lizards (*Urosaurus ornatus*), gopher snakes or bullsnakes (*Pituophis catenifer*), and western terrestrial garter snakes (*Thamnophis elegans*). Gopher snakes can be found throughout Colorado in most plant communities, including riparian areas, semidesert and mountain shrublands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, and ponderosa pine and other montane woodlands. Western terrestrial garter snakes occur throughout most of western Colorado, usually below 11,000 feet. Smooth green snakes



(*Opheodrys vernalis*) can be present in riparian areas, but in western Colorado, may also be common in mountain shrublands far from water (Hammerson 1999).

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.**

**Proposed Action.** Terrestrial wildlife could be temporarily displaced by the noise, human presence, and equipment associated with trail construction, but these impacts would be minimal and short-term. Work would not be conducted during winter when mule deer and elk concentrate in the area. Due to the small amount of vegetation that would be lost and abundance of similar vegetation in the project vicinity, the Proposed Action would not impact terrestrial wildlife populations over the long term on a landscape level. Rerouting portions of the trail to a less steep alignment could result in minimal long-term benefits through improved soil stability.

**No Action Alternative.** The trail would not be rerouted, so vegetation would not be removed and wildlife would not be temporarily displaced due to noise, human presence, and equipment. Soil stability would not be improved.

#### **LAND HEALTH STANDARD 3 FOR HEALTHY ANIMAL COMMUNITIES.**

Based on the Land Health Assessment for the Eagle River South Watershed (BLM 2003), Land Health Standard 3 was being achieved with problem areas on the West Hardscrabble Allotment. The Proposed Action would not diminish the achievement of this standard, and should improve soil stability along the trail.

#### **CUMULATIVE EFFECTS.** Incremental impacts of Proposed Action and alternatives:

*Wildlife, Including Special Status Species.* The area covered by the Proposed Action only comprises a small portion of the watershed. Many other land use activities (e.g., recreation, housing, road maintenance, livestock grazing) occur within the watershed. All of these activities have altered the amount of suitable and potentially suitable habitats for terrestrial wildlife species. Cumulatively, many of the future actions planned on private and other lands may have some undetermined effect on wildlife including special status species habitat. The Proposed Action would create negligible landscape-level cumulative impacts to wildlife when viewed in comparison with those activities currently occurring and reasonably certain to occur on adjacent private/other lands.

#### **TRIBES, INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR AGENCIES CONSULTED.**

The CRVFO consulted with the following:

- Town of Eagle
- Hardscrabble Trails Coalition

**LIST OF PREPARERS.** Members of the CRVFO Interdisciplinary Team who participated in the impact analysis of the Proposed Action and alternatives, development of appropriate mitigation measures, and preparation of this EA are listed in Table 6, along with their areas of responsibility.

**Table 6. BLM Interdisciplinary Team Authors and Reviewers.**

Name	Title	Areas of Participation
Isaac Pittman	Rangeland Management Specialist	Range
Carla DeYoung	Ecologist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern; Vegetation; T/E/S Plants; Wetlands & Riparian Zones, Land Health Standards
Greg Wolfgang	Outdoor Recreation Planner	NEPA Lead, Recreation, VRM, Travel Management
Kimberly Leitzinger	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, Recreation
Erin Leifeld	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns
Hilary Boyd	Wildlife Biologist	Aquatic Wildlife and T/E/S, Migratory Birds, Terrestrial Wildlife and T/E/S
Pauline Adams	Hydrologist	Air Quality, Water Quality, Soils, Geology
Kristy Wallner	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species (Noxious Weeds)
Brian Hopkins	Assistant Field Manager	NEPA Compliance

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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
COLORADO RIVER VALLEY FIELD OFFICE  
SILT, COLORADO

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2015-0050-EA**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT.**

I have reviewed the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the Proposed Action documented in the EA. The effects of the Proposed Action are disclosed in the environmental consequences sections of the EA. Implementing regulations for NEPA (40 CFR 1508.27) provide criteria for determining the significance of the effects. Significant, as used in NEPA, requires consideration of both context and intensity.

Based upon the review of the test for significance and the environmental analyses conducted, I have determined that the actions analyzed in the EA will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, I have determined that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary for this proposal.

**SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICIAL.**



Brian R. Hopkins  
Assistant Field Manager  
Colorado River Valley Field Office

7-31-15

Date



**UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
COLORADO RIVER VALLEY FIELD OFFICE  
SILT, COLORADO**

**DECISION RECORD**

**DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2015-0050-EA**

**DECISION.**

It is my decision to authorize the Proposed Action as described in Environmental Assessment DOI-BLM-CO-N040-2015-0050-EA with the following mitigation measures. This decision will result in the construction and maintenance of a trail for non-motorized recreation activities just west of the Town of Eagle, Colorado.

**RATIONALE.**

The Proposed Action will contribute to achieving recreation objectives for the Hardscrabble-East Eagle SRMA as identified in the CRVFO ROD and Approved RMP by enhancing close to town recreation opportunities for non-motorized recreation activities.

The trail reroute is part of an integrated trail system cooperatively administered and managed by the BLM and the Town of Eagle. The trail reroute will enhance non-motorized recreation opportunities west of the Horton Street Trailhead.

The reroute will create an environmentally sound and sustainable trail that will meet the needs of non-motorized trail users while reducing soil loss and erosion caused by the original route.

**MITIGATION MEASURES.**

Cultural Resources. If subsurface cultural values are uncovered during operations, all work in the vicinity of the resource will cease and the authorized officer with the BLM notified immediately. The operator shall take any additional measures requested by the BLM to protect discoveries until they can be adequately evaluated by the permitted archaeologist. Within 48 hours of the discovery, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and consulting parties will be notified of the discovery and consultation will begin to determine an appropriate mitigation measure. BLM in cooperation with the operator will ensure that the discovery is protected from further disturbance until mitigation is completed. Operations may resume at the discovery site upon receipt of written instructions and authorization by the authorized officer.

Native American Human Remains. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g), the holder must notify the authorized officer, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony on federal land. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4 (c) and (d), the holder must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery that could adversely affect the discovery. The holder shall make a reasonable effort to protect the human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony for a period of thirty days after written notice is provided to the authorized officer, or until the authorized officer has issued a written notice to proceed, whichever occurs first.

#### **APPEALS.**

All of the documents supporting this decision are available for the review by the public. Appeal procedures for this decision are outlined in Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4. In accordance with Title 43 CFR 4.410 any party to a case who is adversely affected by the decision of an officer of the Bureau of Land Management shall have a right to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (Board). The Notice of Appeal must be filed in the Bureau of Land Management office that issued the decision within 30 days after the date of service (43 CFR 4.411). Procedures for filing an appeal are described on BLM Form 1842-1 (September 2006).

**NAME OF PREPARER.** Gregory Wolfgang, Outdoor Recreation Planner.

#### **SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZING OFFICIAL.**



Brian R. Hopkins  
Assistant Field Manager  
Colorado River Valley Field Office



Date